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ABSTRACT

Focusing mainly on television, this document provides facts about the mass media world of children in Sweden. Contents concern (1) toddlers and television; (2) viewing among 3- to 8-year-olds, including the number of children viewing, television in day care centers, times at which children view television, and viewing with others; (3) viewing among 9- to 14-year-olds, including how much they view, how many are viewing, sex differences in viewing, children's preferences, and viewing alone or with someone; (4) video viewing; (5) children, youth, and radio; (6) total mass media consumption; (7) understanding and effects, including discussions of children's ability to understand television, the importance of language to understanding, preschool children's lack of perspective on television, effects of television on young viewers, television as a medium for education, why children watch television, including a look at fear, violence, norms, and values; (8) improvement in Swedish children's over-all situation; and (9) television in the future. (RH)

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Children and Massmedia in Sweden

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Audience and Programme Research Dpt

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FACTS ABOUT SWEDISH TELEVISION AND RADIO

- The Swedish Television Broadcasting Company (SVT) broadcasts a total of about 90 hours a week over two channels. Transmissions weekdays begin with children's programmes at 4.30 PM.
  Before 4:30, the only transmissions weekdays are school television programmes, intended for classroom use. SVT offers daytime programming of sports, feature films and minority language programmes Saturdays, Sundays and major holidays.

- Slightly more than half the television programmes are domestic productions; nearly half are bought. Imports come mainly from the USA and England. The share of imports varies between programme categories: roughly 25 percent of non-fiction is of foreign origin; the corresponding figure for fiction and entertainment categories is approximately 75 percent. The motives for importation are primarily economic. Entertainment programmes are generally more costly than non-fiction production.

- Of SVT's 90 hours of programming weekly about 11 hours (12 percent) are programmes for children and youth. Of these, the greatest share is intended for younger children.

- In addition to SVT, the Swedish Educational Broadcasting Company (UR) transmits about 8 hours of television programming a week, the above-mentioned school television programmes included.

- The Swedish Radio Broadcasting Company (RR) transmits more than 400 hours a week over three channels. Of these, about 5 percent represents programming for juvenile audiences: 5-6 hours /week for children - of which one-fourth is for preschoolers and three-fourths for school-aged children - and 12 hours/week for teens and young adults.

- Certain stations of the Swedish Local Broadcasting Company (LRAB) also offer programmes for children and young people (in some cases over separate local stations).

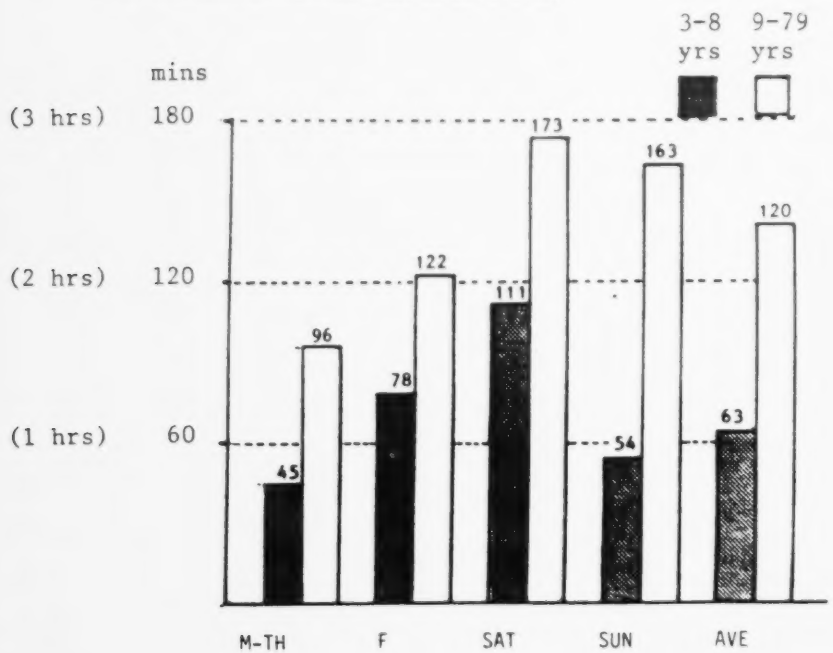
- School radio programmes are produced by the Swedish Educational Broadcasting Company (UR).

FACTS ABOUT SWEDISH CHILDREN´S MASS MEDIA WORLD

TODDLERS AND TELEVISION

The Children´s programming departments at TV1 and TV2 make programmes for viewers four years of age and older, but the juvenile audience includes every second 2-year-old the average day. On average, 2-year-olds watch television slightly less than 30 minutes a day (including those who do not watch; those who do watch spend 51 minutes in front of their sets).

VIEWING AMONG 3- TO 8-YEAR OLDS



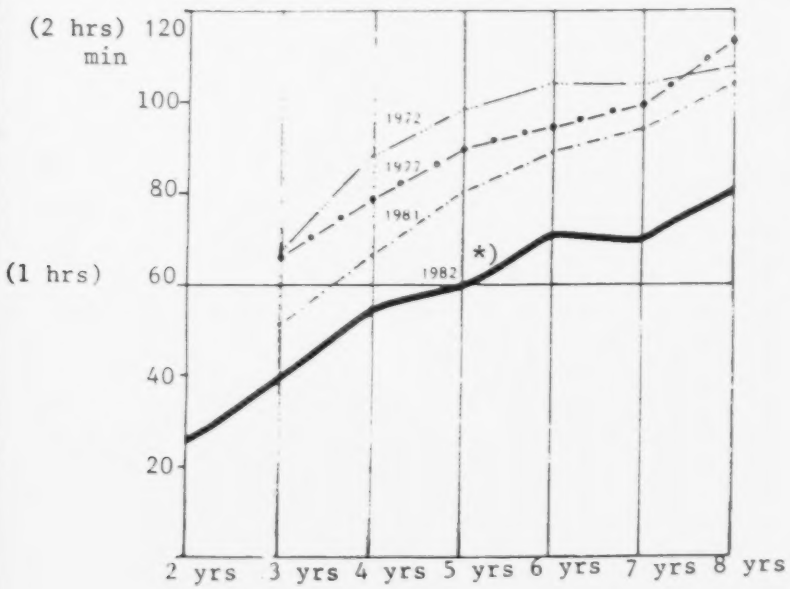
Viewing among 3- to 8-year-olds different days of the week in November 1982, compared to the rest of the population, aged 9 to 79.
The figures for 1984 are equal those of 1982.

On average, these children (representing preschoolers through second graders) watch television just over one hour a day, whereas the rest of the population watch two hours. Like most people, young children watch more television at the week-ends.
Children of parents with little formal education watch considerably more television than do children of highly educated parents. In this age group boys and girls consume roughly the same amount of television.

Young children don´t watch what they don´t like

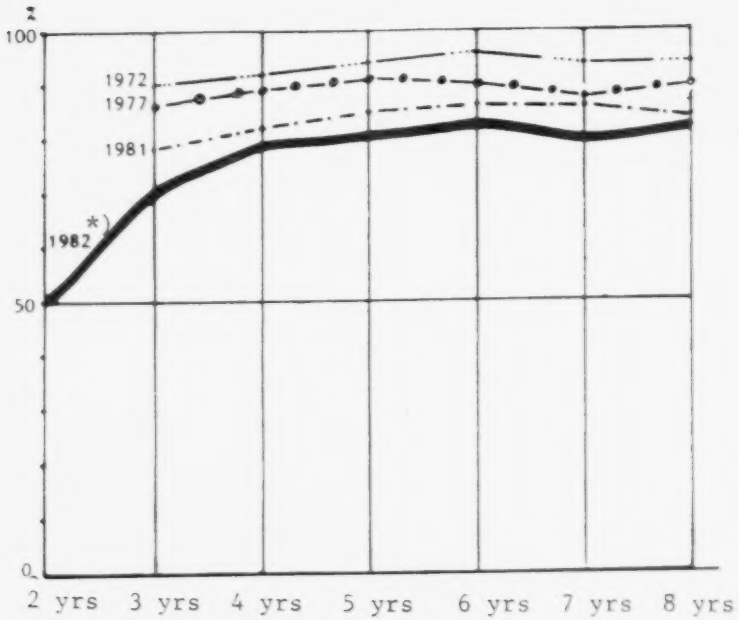
Whereas viewing among adults has remained relatively stable, viewing among 3- to 8-year-olds has declined consistently over the past decade. Children of all ages between three and eight years watch television one hour a day, compared to roughly 90 minutes ten years ago. When attractive programmes are shown, the children are eager to watch, but in the absence of attractive programmes they find other things to do.

The decline in young children´s viewing has mainly occurred at the expense of adult programmes, not children´s fare.



Viewing among 3- to 8-year-olds (mins/day) by age in different years. (*No changes between -82 and -84).

HOW MANY YOUNG CHILDREN ARE WATCHING?



The shares of 3- to 8-year-olds viewing the average day in different years.

The numbers of children viewing have also declined among all ages over the past decade. In 1972, 93 percent of the age group watched television the average day. Ten years later, the figure had dropped to 80 percent.

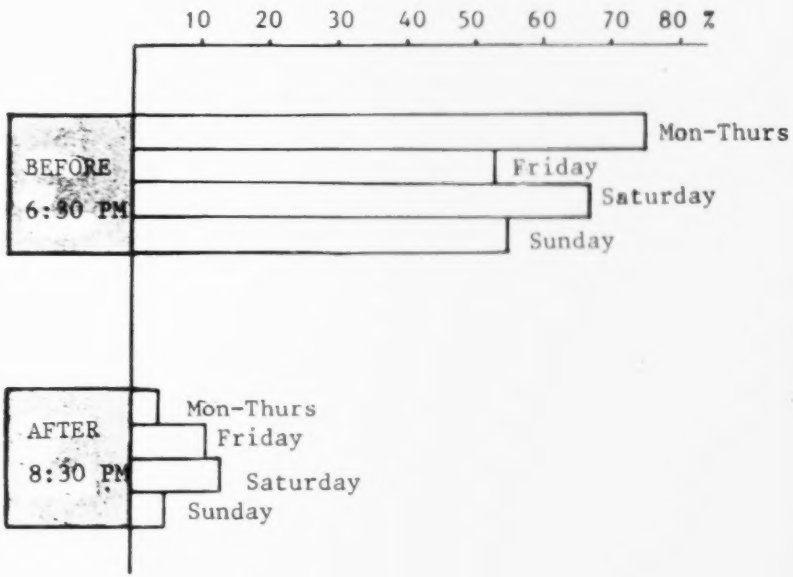
*) No changes between -82 and -84).

4.

TELEVISION IN DAY CARE CENTRES

About one third of Sweden´s preschoolers attend public day care centres. Nearly all Swedish day care facilities are equipped with television sets, and roughly half of them use the set the average day. Viewing is largely confined to the blocks of programmes intended for preschool audiences.

WHEN DO YOUNG CHILDREN WATCH?



Share of viewing time among 3- to 8-year-olds before 6:30 PM and after 8:30 PM by day of week.

Weekdays, 3- to 8-year-olds do three-quarters of their viewing before 6:30 PM, and very few are in front of their television sets after 8:30 PM. Week-ends, too, most of this group´s viewing occurs before 6:30 PM. There are, of course, differences according to age within the group: 8-year-olds, for example, do one-third of their viewing after 7:30 PM Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays.

WHAT DO YOUNG CHILDREN PREFER?

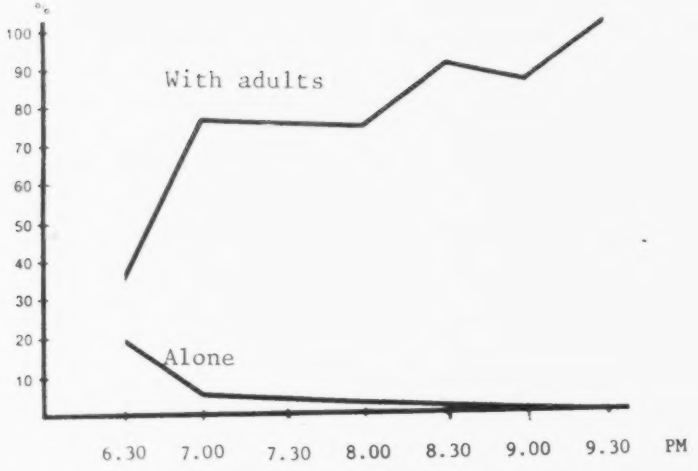
*	Three-year-olds	spend three-quarters of their viewing time watching children´s programmes and the remaining time watching family and adult fare.
*	Eight-year-olds	devote more than half their viewing time to family and adult fare.

The blocks of programmes intended for the youngest viewers attract sizable day-to-day audiences, 40 to 60 percent of the age group, depending on the time slot. Special series based on popular children´s books like Pippi Longstocking and Emil in Lönneberga by Astrid Lindgren and the Moomin Family tales by Tove Jansson attract as much as 70 to 90 percent of the age group.

TELEVISION - A BABY-SITTER?

It is often claimed that families use television as a baby-sitter, that many children are left alone in front of their television sets to watch violent programmes late at night. Our data lend no support to these charges, at least not as far as young children are concerned. Children often view television together with adults. Indeed, in many Swedish families television viewing is the chief activity engaged in by children and adults together. Viewing of children´s fare is an exception: roughly one-third of the children viewing the programmes for young children at 4:30 and 5:30 PM watch them together with an adult. Mostly, these programmes are viewed together with sisters, brothers or playmates. After 6:30 PM, however, three-fourths or more of the children are accompanied by an adult in front of the set.

6.

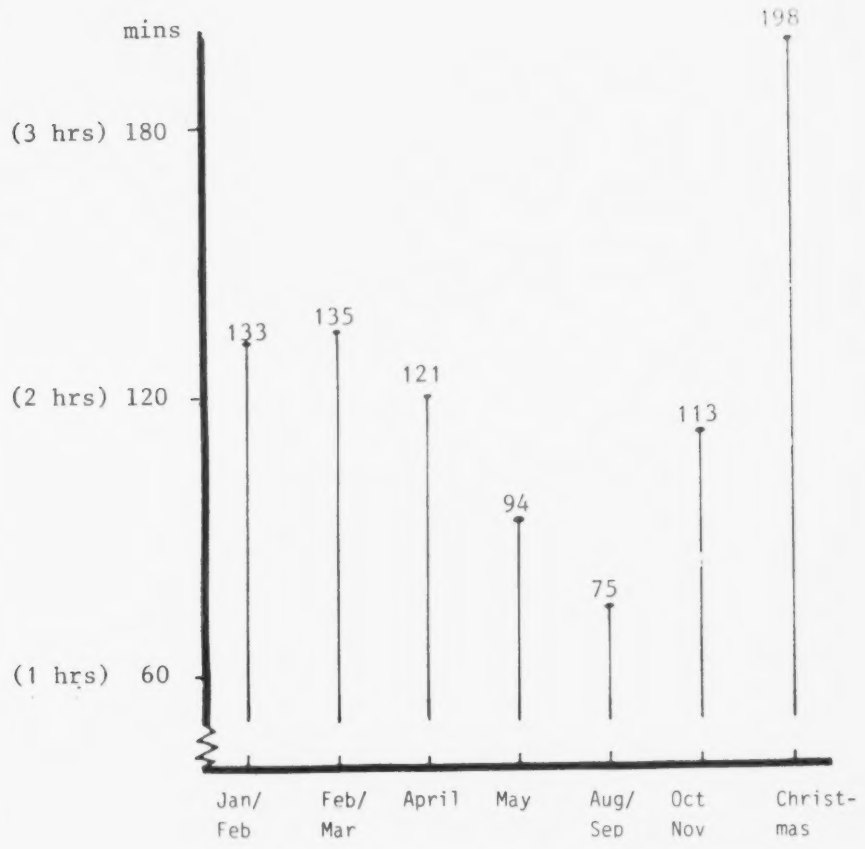


The shares of 3- to 8-year-olds viewing with adults alone at different times of the day.

Quite many children fall asleep in front of the TV set: 18 percent of Swedish 3- to 8-year-olds (approx 100 000 children) generally fall asleep in front of the set sometime during the week; two percent do so every night.

VIEWING AMONG 9- TO 14-YEAR-OLDS

How much do they view?



Average daily viewing among 9- to 14-year-olds different months of the year.

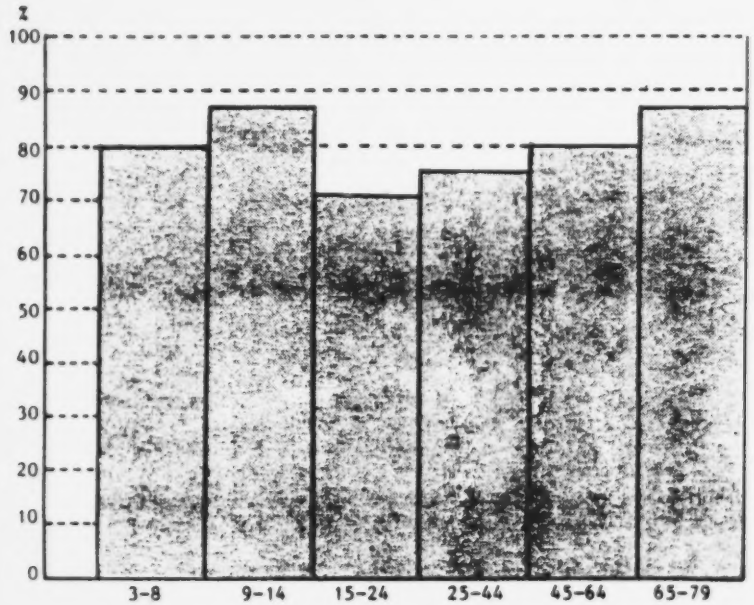
The time 9- to 14-year-olds spend watching television varies according to season, the amount of leisure time they have, the amount of programming offered and the appeal of the programming to young audiences. Were television to transmit

sports coverage and feature films during the daytime and other attractive entertainment evenings during the dark winter months, average viewing time might well climb to over five hours a day.

As it is, daily viewing is somewhat more than two hours on average. Some 8 percent (50,000 children) view more than five hours a day, however, and 18 percent watch television more than six hours Saturdays.

Viewing varies within the group: 13- to 14-year-olds watch most, and 9- to 10-year-olds watch least.

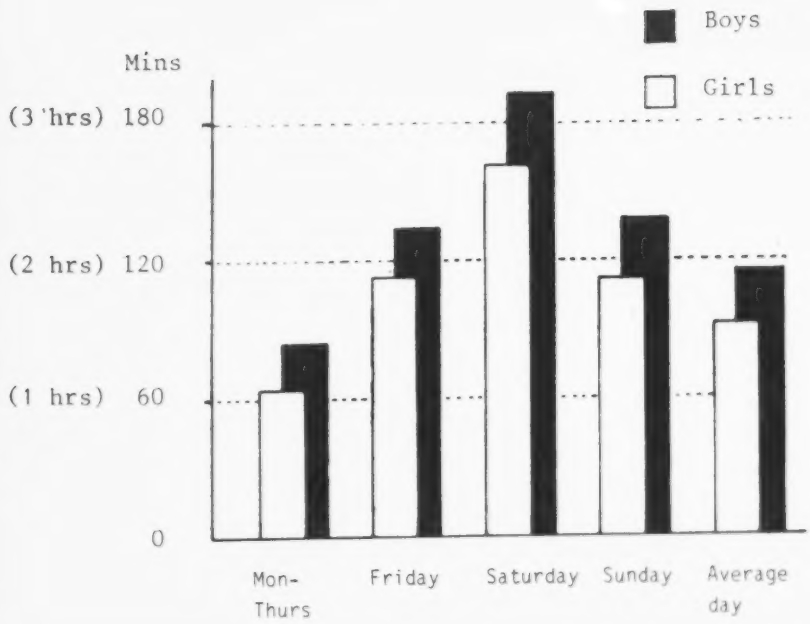
HOW MANY CHILDREN ARE WATCHING?



Share of the population watching television the average day, by age.

Children aged 9 to 14 and pensioners are the most avid consumers of Swedish television. Eighty-seven percent of both groups watch television the average day. Young people of 15 and older view less. This pattern is perennial.

VIEWING AMONG BOYS AND GIRLS

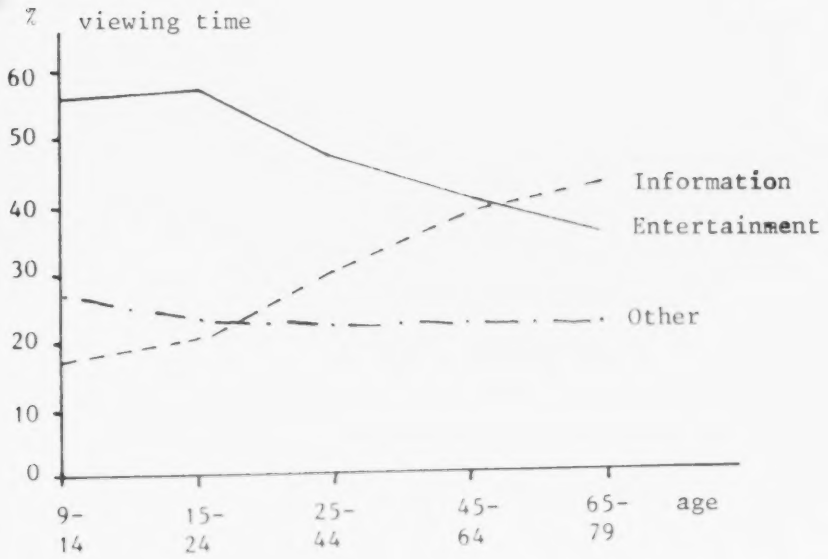


Differences between boys' and girls' viewing among 9- to 14-year-olds by days of the week.

Among adults, men watch television more than women. Among 9- to 14-year-olds boys view 23 minutes more than girls the average day.
More than twice as many boys as girls watch sports events.

10.

WHAT DO 9-14 YEAR-OLD CHILDREN PREFER?



Viewing of entertainment and informative programmes by age

Program preferences differ quite markedly between different age groups. Among the population aged 15 and older, viewing of information content increases with age, whereas viewing of entertainment declines to an equal extent (cf. the diagram above).

In contrast to adults, 9- to 14-year-olds tend to avoid news, current events and other non-fiction. By contrast, they consume more entertainment - fiction, feature films and shows - than adults.

Nonetheless, compared to other media children use, television is the most informative. Swedish children of these ages watch an average 18 minutes of news and non-fiction a day. By way of comparison we might note that the same age group spend 18

minutes of their leisure a day reading (for pleasure, not homework). Most of such reading involves light, amusing rather than informative content.

One Swedish 9- to 14-year-old in ten watches one of the two evening newscasts (30 minutes of news and news commentary each) the average day.

Dramatized series and serials for juvenile and "family" audiences, exert the strongest powers of attraction on 9- to 14-year-olds. These programs can have child audiences of 75-85 percent. Certain adult series such as Dallas and Macahan (80%) attain the same popularity. Among all-time record-breaking programmes was the edition of the annual EBU Popular Song Contest, which Swedish teen-aged vocalist and "cult figure" Carola Häggqvist won. Nine out of ten children in this age group watched the programme.

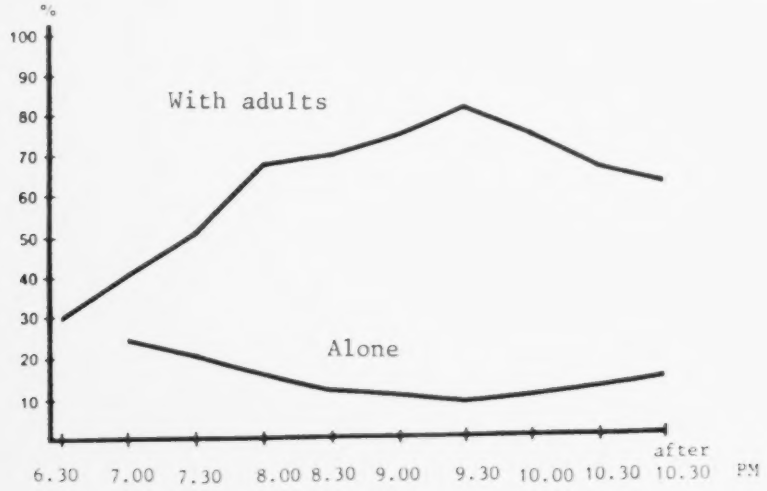
Morning transmissions during the Christmas holidays (featuring cartoons, serials and magazine-type items presented by a studio host) also attract many children of these ages. One Swedish series that combined studio "patter" and filmed comedy sketches attracted nearly 100 percent of this age group.

However, children of these ages also watch programmes with informative content if they are adapted to young audiences. Two such magazine-format news shows have attracted Saturday-night audiences of 50 to 60 percent of 9- to 14-year-olds.

Despite the fact that juvenile and family fare can attain "blockbuster" audiences among 9- to 14-year-olds, they habitually devote as much as 80 percent of their viewing time to adult programmes. In fact, the group show greater interest in foreign entertainment than adults do.

VIEWING ALONE OR TOGETHER . . .

During prime time, 7:30 - 9.30 PM, the great majority of 9- to 14-year-olds are accompanied by an adult in front of the set. Ten to fifteen percent of the viewers in this age group view alone.



The shares of 9- 14 year olds viewing with adults alone at different times of the day.

EARLY OR LATE?

Children of these ages spend as much of their viewing time on programmes transmitted after 9:30 PM as adults do. When, for example, Swedish television offers a thriller that film censors found unsuitable for children late at night, the lateness of the hour hardly keeps 9- to 14-year-olds from watching it. On the contrary, the share of viewers among this age group on such occasions is greater than the share of adults who choose to watch.

VIDEO VIEWING

In the Winter of 1985, more than 20 percent of Swedish households contained a video recorder. Access to video is most widespread among families with children in the home: in February of 1985 almost every third Swedish young person between the ages of 3 and 24 years had a video in his or her home. 15 percent of all 9-24 year olds watched something on video the average day. Among young children (3-8 years) the figure was 10 percent. Many more young people - about 90 percent - have access to video in the homes of friends or relatives.

Possession of video is most widespread in Stockholm and other large Swedish cities. Children of parents with little formal education watch video the most; they are also the heaviest consumers of television.

Unlike adults with access to video who mainly use their recorders to tape broadcasts, young people between 15 and 24 years mainly view rental films. Viewing among young people increases with age. Preferred genres are violence-horror, mystery-suspense and action-adventure. Three- to eight-year-olds mainly watch children´s programmes and juvenile films, especially cartoons like Woody Woodpecker and Donald Duck.

3- to 14-year-olds who have access to a video recorder in their family watch about one hour (62 minutes) an average day 15- to 24-year-olds watch about 80 minutes.

Since much consumption of video takes place when TV1 and TV2 are not on the air, this viewing does not interfere with television viewing. On the contrary, heavy consumers of video are also heavy consumers of television.

CHILDREN, YOUTH AND RADIO

Radio programmes for juvenile audience have until lately been concentrated to P3 (light music) so as to make them more accessible to their target audience. (Most Swedes listen to P3 exclusively.)

Programmes for preschoolers are broadcast 15 minutes early weekday mornings. Some 30,000 children between 3 and 8 years of age (7 percent of the age group) listen to these programmes.

Children´s radio can sometimes attract far greater audiences when it features well-known children´s stories like "Emil in Lönneberga" or when well-known artists participate in programmes.

Children and young people have always been especially interested in music, and radio was long the most accessible source of music. Nowadays, gramophones and cassette recorders have largely supplanted radio music-listening. Practically all Swedish children and young people own cassette recorders.

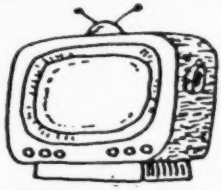
Some 370,000 children aged 9 to 14 listen to the radio the average day. That represents roughly half of this age group. Listeners of these ages spend approximately 90 minutes a day listening to the radio. This represents an average 46 minutes a day for the age group as a whole, listeners and nonlisteners alike.

Radio listening increases with age: a 19 year-old, for example, listens 60 minutes more per day than a 12-year-old. Listening peaks between 7 and 8 AM (as it does among adults, as well).

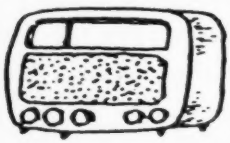
Children and young people between 9 and 20 years of age listen mainly to music and programmes intended for youth. They also listen to local radio broadcasts, which offer music and information about local events, etc., at convenient listening times. Young people listen to the radio more on weekdays and Saturdays than on Sundays.

TOTAL MASS MEDIA CONSUMPTION

How much time do children and youth spend with the media the average day? (1)



	Total minutes		
VIEWING	3-8 yrs	9-14 yrs	15-24 yrs
TV	61	109	84
Video	7	10	11



LISTENING			
Radio	5	46	81
Records/ cassettes	24	26	81

READING			
Books (2)	32	28	28
Newspapers	1	6	17
Magazines	1	8	11
Journals	-	4	8
Comic books	14	15	6

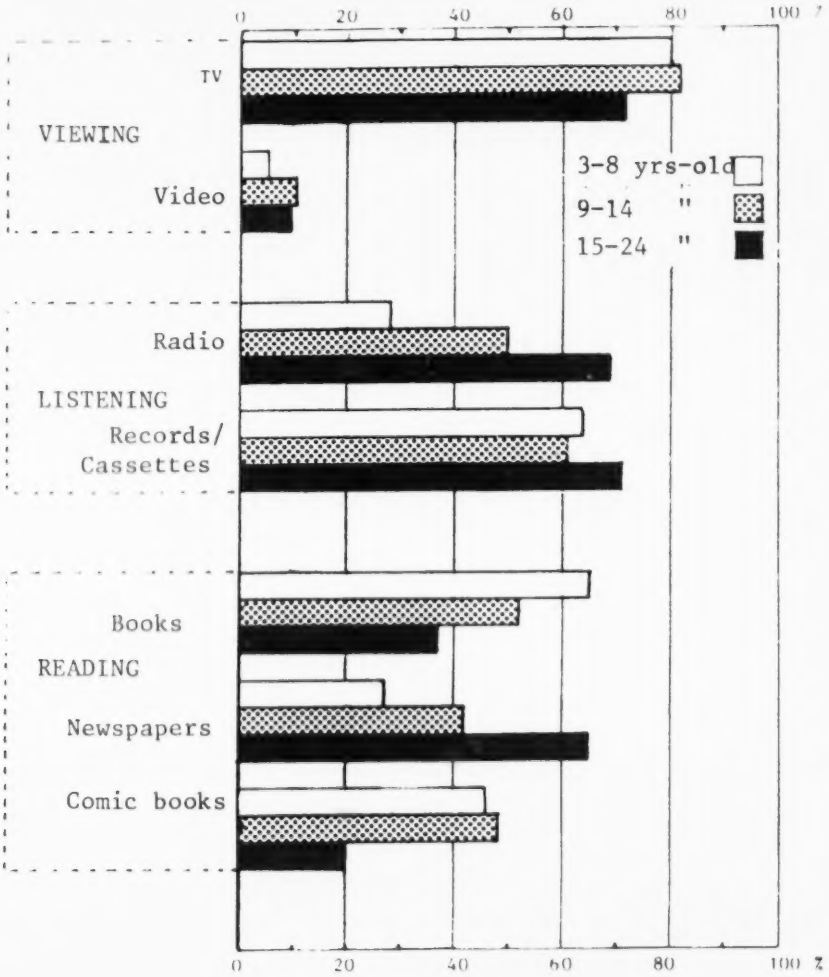
Notes: 1) The figures for TV are based on annual averages. Data for the other media are based on a brief period during the Autumn.

2) Includes textbooks. "Reading for pleasure" amounts to 18 and 27 minutes, respectively for the 9-24 year olds.

CINEMA

Cinema-attendance increases with age: a 4-year-old goes to the cinema roughly twice a year; a 14 year-old goes seven times.

HOW MANY USE THE MEDIA THE AVERAGE DAY?



Children ages 9 - 14 devote about 4 hours of their leisure time to the mass media each day, which is somewhat less than other age groups. Instead, they devote a greater share of their time to sports and recreation, often in organized forms. Among all age groups, 15- to 24-year-olds are those who devote most time - over 5 1/2 hours a day - to the media.

CHANGES IN MEDIA USE

When Sweden´s second TV channel came on the air, both elder and younger children doubled their viewing time. Since then, viewing among the youngest children, aged 3 to 8, has declined. Viewing is still at a far higher level than during the single-channel era, however.

Viewing among elder children, 9-14 years, has varied widely from time to time, due in part to seasonal variations and in part to the appeal of the programmes offered. No consistent trend upwards or downwards has been noted since the sharp increase in viewing with the advent of TV2 however.

Radio listening has declined sharply during the 1970s among children of all ages, having been supplanted by listening to records and cassettes.

"Reading" of newspapers, comic books and magazines among younger children has declined since the early 1970s, whereas reading of books has increased.

Elder children read fewer newspapers and magazines today than they did ten years ago, whereas reading of comic books has increased. Reading of books has remained more or less stable. Cinema attendance has declined somewhat. Reading for pleasure (as opposed to school work) is almost exclusively confined to fiction. Newspapers, too, serve more as sources of entertainment than of news. The content most read is television tableaux and features about programmes, comic strips, sports news and news about accidents and crime. Donald Duck, The Phantom, Superman and Tarzan are the most popular comic books.

UNDERSTANDING AND EFFECTS

CAN YOUNG CHILDREN REALLY UNDERSTAND TELEVISION?

Children are used to not being able to understand what they see and hear. The world they live in is often puzzling. Consequently, they are neither surprised nor frustrated when they don´t understand everything they see on television. A lot of what they see is most probably far "over their heads". Children´s programmes make up only a small fraction of programming, and we know that children watch a lot of programmes that are intended for adults.

Generally speaking, children aged 4 to 6 find it difficult to follow a story or longer sequences of events on television. They grasp individual scenes and brief episodes but cannot fit them together to make a comprehensible whole. They lack what Swiss child psychologist Jean Piaget calls reversible thinking, i.e. the ability to think back and relate recalled images to the present and to predict future events on the basis of past and present evidence. Furthermore, film and television narratives often make use of techniques that are too sophisticated for child audiences. Editing effects (cuts, zooms, fades, etc.) and shifts in time and geographical setting can in fact prevent understanding.

Even school-aged children do not always understand what they see in films or on television. As noted earlier, children of these ages mainly watch programmes intended for adults such as mysteries, thrillers and feature films. The stories in such films are often told in a rhapsodic fashion, both through editing devices and due to temporal shifts, switching between parallel plots, etc. In such cases viewers must "fill in the gaps" on the basis of their own knowledge and experience and apply their own powers of deduction. Studies have shown that children in primary school, boys in particular, have difficulty in following such narratives. They tend to get "hung up" on "action-packed"scenes and other dramatic details.

Younger children, too, like "action". They stay in front of the set even though they may not understand the plot or the point, as in the case of animated cartoons, in which every single scene contains so much drama that the child´s interest never flags.

In such cases it is the action, dramatic pictures and sound effects that keep the viewer´s attention rather than the theme or logic of the story. Animated cartoons have such a strong appeal by virtue of the stark clarity of their images and the simplicity of the narrative that they may also be used to present serious, educational content without attention-getting effects. Several Swedish animations of children´s stories have demonstrated that low-key presentations, too, can interest young viewers. The form itself enlivens - "animates" in a literal sense of the word - the content presented.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE

Often, the stories in television films are very dialogue-dependent. Viewers have greater need of consistency in the dialogue than in the visuals in order to follow the story. Similarly, speaker voices and subtitles play a vital role. We all know how difficult it can be to understand, and how easy to misinterpret, what is going on if we turn off the sound on our television sets. We face similar problems when we fail to read the subtitles in foreign-language films - which many children under 11 cannot. Our dependence on language is not total, however. Some animated children´s programmes are so visually explicit that their viewers keep on watching.

When, sometime soon, foreign transmissions via satellite are available to Swedish homes, we can be quite certain that they will offer programmes that are comprehensible enough to Swedish children that they will watch them, even though the language is gibberish to them.

TELEVISION - A MAGIC WINDOW

Preschool children have no perspective on television; the boundary between fact and fantasy is fluid in their minds. To them, television is "a magic "window" a place where anything can happen, a world of reality in miniature. Indeed, some of the very youngest viewers believe that there really are miniature people moving around inside the television set.

Younger preschoolers believe that living dolls and animated characters may exist in real life, but soon they come to realize that many programmes - particularly camera animations and animated cartoons - are only make-believe. Many fictional dramas seem "authentic", however, even among schoolchildren of up to 10-11 years.

Children in the first years of primary school often refer to superficial details of characters´clothing and the setting in which the story takes place in making judgements as to whether or not a programme is "for real" or only make-believe. A police drama, for example, may be taken for "real life" simply because the people and milieux depicted seem familiar. That the plot is far-fetched or that the characters behave in a simplistic, stereotypical way is not always noticed. Around the age of 10-12, however, children begin to be more discriminating in their judgements. They begin thinking about the likelihood, the plausibility of the events they see, about whether or not characters behave like people do in real life, and whether the resolution of the plot seems reasonable.

STUPEFYING AND PASSIVATING?

Can television make children dumb? Cultural commentators have ventilated this question increasingly often in recent years. Some have referred to evidence that television may affect the brain so that it becomes less able to meet the intellectual demands of school work. Others point out that viewing displaces reading so that children cannot read as well as they might otherwise, and, whatever the case, they do not read as much as they should.

Research on brain functions has not provided conclusive enough evidence to support hypotheses as to possible effects of television viewing. As to the relationship between viewing and reading, American research findings suggest that "moderate" viewing of about two hours a day has no particular effect on how much children read. Swedish data indicate that heavy consumers of television devote more time to other media, as well, magazines and radio included. Book-reading is about the same among heavy and light consumers of television, nor has reading of books declined during the 1970s (after Swedish television doubled its output).

STIMULATING, ACTIVATING?

The research to date is partly conflicting on this point. Some findings suggest that television does not stimulate viewers´ creativity, but that the images it offers instead "confine" the viewer´s imagination to what is served. Radio, on the other hand, leaves more leeway for the listener to create his or her own images of the content. Some findings indicate that heavy consumption of television inhibits children´s development of verbal skills (as measured in intelligence tests). These findings are limited, however, to American studies and to heavy consumers of television.

Other findings suggest that viewing and listening to the radio stimulate our intellect and imagination in different ways. When we watch television, we tend to remember more of what we see - acts, gestures, etc. That is, we absorb the visual language of the medium. When we listen, on the other hand, we tend to recall dialogue, figurative language, etc. Television also "compresses" our temporal perspective - characters move more quickly from place to place than in reality. Listening, by contrast, extends it.

Many fear that the multitude of visual images in modern society, especially through extensive exposure to television, may inhibit children´s ability to "make their own pictures", to form their own visual impressions of what they read and hear. Research findings are somewhat contradictory on this point, as well. Certain studies have found television content to give viewers´ imaginations less leeway than radio content.

Others have found an opposite tendency. There are also indications that other factors, e.g. the school, may influence children´s imagination. When school-aged children are asked to depict what they have heard, they tend to express themselves in conventional images. They have learned certain codes, certain mannerisms, and stick to them. Children most probably need more support from the school and others in order to keep their imaginations free.

Studies have also shown that programmes that are made to stimulate juvenile audiences have achieved their goal, especially when an adult is present to help the children enact the impulses they have gained from the programme. Sometimes no overt incitement to activity is necessary; the children are activated, anyway. A Swedish series taught sign-language for the deaf so effectively that children used it as a "secret language" on playgrounds all over the country. Another series, similar to Sesame Street in format and starring rather well-known Swedish comedians, taught children the alphabet, numbers, songs and rhymes. Parents, too, liked the programmes, so that the whole family talked about the programmes (thus reinforcing the content).

TELEVISION AS A MEDIUM FOR EDUCATION

In early years great hopes were attached to television as a potential educator. It was hoped that the medium might serve as a "social equalizer", bridging so-called information gaps between different groups in society. Time and again, however, television was shown to have widened such gaps among children of different social backgrounds rather than close them. Those who already knew something about the content presented learned much more from programmes than those who did not. In-depth analyses of specific target audiences - minorities and underprivileged children -show that these groups, too, gain knowledge from television programmes like Sesame Street and are thus better equipped for school than they would be otherwise. The results are even better when programmes are tailor-made for these groups. Swedish television, for example, offers native-language programmes for children of the major immigrant groups (Finnish, Greek, etc).

Television has also proven a more effective educator when information is offered in series so that "lessons" and messages can be repeated and reinforced from segment to segment.

Although different children learn different amounts and different things from television, there are some subjects that practically all children in the long run have been informed about through the medium. Schoolchildren of the television era have,for example, learned about foreign countries, politics and political leaders. Television has also given children ideas of war and peace. In fact, it seems as though television - and other media - have greater influence the greater the distance, psychological and geographical, between the viewer, and the subject described. Or, in other words, the less the influence of family, friends and the school, the greater the influence of the media. Thus, by way of television the world has shrunk.

It should be noted that children learn from more than purely factual content. They learn much - perhaps even most- from entertainment programmes. Children seek information from television, but preferably in an entertaining "wrapper".

WHY DO CHILDREN WATCH TELEVISION?

Watching television helps to fulfill a number of subjectively perceived needs. Nearly all 3- to 15-year-olds in Sweden say they watch television because the programmes are fun and exciting - television entertains them. About as many children say they watch because they learn things - television satisfies a thirst for information. Thereafter, children mention social motives: they say they watch because they feel lonely, because they want to be together with the others who are watching, and because they have "gotten to know", and identify with, characters in the programmes - in short, television is company. They also say that they can discuss the programmes with others and that having seen certain programmes gives them status in the eyes of their friends - thus, television enhances children´s real social life, as well.

Television surely fulfills other needs that children are unable to define or verbalize. Does, for example, children´s extensive viewing of adult fare satisfy their curiosity about, and wish too participate in, the world of adults, from which they in reality are largely excluded?

One may also wonder what subjective needs certain extremely horrific and sadistically violent video films satisfy among elder children and young adults. Interviews with young people of these ages suggest that the needs for excitement, for the company of the others who watch, and for status in one´s circle of friends all play in. Most probably videos of horror and violence also appeal to deeper psychological needs, but the research to date has not come up with any conclusive findings in that regard.

FEAR, VIOLENCE, NORMS AND VALUES

Needs-satisfaction and effects are not necessarily the same thing. One may seek and find excitement, company and status in television, but still more or less unconsciously be influenced in other respects - be persuaded or confirmed in one´s previous convictions, for example - for better or for worse. Many of the impressions children (and adults) get from television are sound and good, but some features that influence viewers are less desirable.

The most obvious effect is that children can be frightened by things they see on television - among other things by acts of violence, blood, fighting, masked faces, etc. Violence-as-entertainment also contributes to some children´s feelings of aggression and reduces sensitivity to violence in real-life. Extensive viewing of violence-as-entertainment can also give an exaggerated and false impression of the violence that occurs in the real world, both its extent and its nature.

The extreme scenes of horror and brutality that characterize certain video films represent a veritable catalogue of the kind of scenes and themes children say frighten them on television - but in much more concentrated form than on television. Besides frightening young viewers, violent video entertainment, like similar content in cinema films and tele-

vision, can stimulate aggression, render children indifferent to and give them false impressions of violence in society.

Apart from violence-as-entertainment, we know that television - and certainly video, too - sometimes gives rise to or reinforces false impressions and undesired norms and values concerning such things as people´s various roles, the social structure and the "world order". Analyses of television content, for example, show men to be strongly over-represented in television compared to their numbers in reality. The middle class and persons with prestigious occupations are similarly over-represented. Entertainment programmes often depict a glamourous style of life, while news and documentary programmes fail to mention vast regions of the world, which remain "blank spots" on our mental maps.

The media exert greatest influence when they treat things and issues beyond the pale of our personal experience and thinking and questions we have not had the opportunity to form our own opinions about. Thus, it is important that adults talk with children and share their own ideas and say what they think of what is shown on television. Furthermore, together they can choose programmes that are entertaining for children and adults alike

It is essential to keep in mind, however, that the impressions we gain from television are input from but one source among many, including parents, friends, the school, work, other media, etc.

SWEDISH CHILDREN´S OVERALL SITUATION

Living conditions for Swedish children have improved immensely since the turn of the century. This is true in respect of health, material welfare, education, leisure, and (increasingly liberal) upbringing. Childhood today lasts many years, and children enjoy considerable freedom, especially compared to the era prior to the first world war.

Child-care facilities expanded markedly during the 1970s, when great numbers of women were recruited to the labour force. 65 percent of Swedish preschoolers´ mothers are employed outside the home today, and roughly 80 percent of school-aged children´s - many of them on a part-time basis, however. Among single mothers, 90 percent are gainfully employed. Nearly all Swedish fathers have jobs outside the home.

Weekdays, 34 percent of Swedish children aged 3 to 6 attend day-care centres, and 23 percent are cared for by nursery matrons (mothers) who take children into their homes during the day) or private nannies. Thirty-eight percent are during day-time cared for by their own mothers, less than a half percent by their fathers, and four percent by their mothers and fathers in turns. Nearly all 6-year-olds who do not attend day-care centres attend kindergarten. One 7 to 8-year-olds in four attends after-school recreation centres.

Childhood lasts ever longer: increasing numbers of Swedish young people continue on in school after their nine years of compulsory education. They also have considerable leisure and a fair amount of money at their disposal for entertainment, sports and various forms of consumption.

However, numerous studies of living conditions among young people in the 1970s have found, that children and young people are of but marginal importance in modern Swedish society and that they are often disregarded. They are frequently considered an insignificant minority, although more than one-fifth of the population (approx. 1.7 million persons) are in fact children 0-15 years of age. And fully one-third of the population (2.8 million) are 0-24.

The tendency to ignore children and youth in various contexts has to do with an increasing physical segregation of young people from the adult world. First of all, hardly any young people participate in working life. They see few adults at work, nor do they have any part in keeping the production and reproduction going. They seldom have a feeling of making a meaningful contribution, and even all their years of training in school cannot assure them a job.

Secondly, children are increasingly estranged from home and family life. Besides the fact that they spend so much of their childhood and youth in institutions outside the home, the nuclear family is a less certain and less long-lived structure than it was, say, ten to twenty years ago. Most younger children today have no brothers and sisters; the frequency of divorce continues to climb, with every second marriage dissolving in the longer term. The share of "singles" among adults has grown, as has the number of unmarried couples. These latter relationships are less stable than marriages, however. Roughly 10 percent of Swedish children live together with a single parent, and at least 20 percent have biological parents at separate addresses. These frequencies are considerably higher in Swedish cities.

Regardless of what we may think of the nuclear family as an institution, children need deeply rooted, lasting relationships with one or more adults. But nursery school personnel and teachers, too, come and go all too frequently.

It is in this overall context that friends, material consumption and - not least - the massmedia assume great importance - as sources of entertainment, information and social contact. When the average Swedish 15-year-old leaves compulsory school, he or she has spent nearly as much time in front of the television set as in the classroom. The time devoted to all the media - television, radio, books, newspapers, comic books, magazines, records, tapes, video and the cinema - is much greater.

TELEVISION IN THE FUTURE

From the point of view of the individual, advances in communications and information technology mean, among other things, a growing variety of new media - teletext, video, cable-TV, satellites, teledata, etc. Thus, we will have access to a far greater number of television channels and many more programmes, and we will have access to them a greater share of the day than we now do.

Already today, 9- to 14 year-olds devote more time to television than adults do. What may we expect to happen when the output of programmes - perhaps of an even more pronounced entertainment character - expands? On the basis of the research to date we can predict that 9- to 14-year-olds will increase their viewing and that the increase will mainly occur with respect to entertainment programmes intended for adults. 3- to 8-year-olds too, will in the future watch more television, and this increase will involve both programmes for children and programmes for adults.

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